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May 3, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Maureen Hess

SUBJECT: Restoration of Interior Columbia River Coho

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Jon Lovrak – Project Leader for Hatchery Facilities, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Todd Newsome – Fisheries Research Scientist, Yakama Nation Fisheries; Cory Kamphaus – Northern Ceded Lands Production Supervisor, Yakama Nation Fisheries; Becky Johnson – Production Division Director, Nez Perce Tribe; Kyle Bratcher – District Fish Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Summary: Presenters will update the Committee on Coho Salmon restoration programs in the interior Columbia River Basin.

Relevance: The 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and the 2020 Addendum outlines two strategies that are supported by the efforts to restore Coho populations: 1. The use of hatcheries for reintroduction, and 2. Fish propagation including hatchery programs. The presentation is a comprehensive summary of all Coho restoration programs located above Bonneville Dam in the interior Columbia River, of which Bonneville Power Administration provides partial funding for 3 (Umatilla, Yakima, Wenatchee/Methow) out of the 5 restoration programs.

Workplan: Fish and Wildlife Division Workplan; Program Implementation and Performance

Background: By the 1990s, natural populations of many salmonid stocks in the Columbia River had fallen to highly depressed levels and were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Regulatory protections and funding for restoration became available for threatened or endangered populations. In contrast, interior Columbia River Coho Salmon had already been extirpated and were not petitioned for listing. Therefore, there were no ESA-related legal obligations to enact restoration measures. In April 1996, a couple of the coho efforts (i.e., Mid-Columbia and Yakima) were part of the 15 high priority supplementation projects recommended for funding by the NPCC and was incorporated into the Fish and Wildlife Program. These high priority supplementation projects were forwarded with strong endorsements from both the *US v. Oregon* Policy Committee and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Coho reintroduction and restoration programs were initiated in the 1990s in the Yakima, Wenatchee, Methow, Umatilla, and Clearwater subbasins, and in 2017 in the Grande Ronde subbasin. The source of fish for reintroduction came from lower Columbia River hatchery stocks. Juvenile coho salmon from lower river hatcheries were transported upriver and were acclimated or direct released near potential spawning habitat in the interior Basin. Each year, a portion of the reintroduced Coho returned as mature adults, some spawned naturally, and within a few generations were creating emerging natural populations. Increasing numbers of fish are now returning to interior Basin rivers, allowing for hatchery programs to source local broodstock and support fisheries. The efforts demonstrate that fish hatcheries play an important conservation role by re-establishing naturally spawning populations as well as providing adult returns that support treaty and non-treaty fisheries.

More Info:

Mid-Columbia Coho:

[Wenatchee and Methow Subbasins: Coho Reintroductions](#)

[Mid-Columbia Coho Restoration Project, Project # 1996-040-00, NPCC decision](#)

Yakima River Coho:

[Yakima Basin Coho Reintroduction](#)

[Melvin R. Sampson Hatchery, NPCC decision](#)

Grande Ronde and Clearwater Coho:

[Restored Coho Salmon Run Supports Tribal, Sport Fisheries in Northeast Oregon for the First Time in Decades](#)

[Clearwater Coho Restoration](#)

[How Mitchell Act Supports Fisheries](#)

Umatilla:

[Three Mile Falls Dam and Pendleton Acclimation facilities support the Umatilla Coho program](#)